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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, February 3, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Family Jolts and Jars." Information from Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

Automobiles have become a violent hobby with Billy lately. They consume his every waking thought and probably all his dreams as well. He talks of nothing else and has even taken to reading the advertisements aloud to Uncle Ebenezer. Most of this conversation about differentials and gear shifts and such complicated things goes in one of my ears and out the other, because my mind, as Billy has discovered, was never fitted to understand mechanics. Last night, however, one sentence Billy read did catch my attention.

"Shock absorbers, strong flexible springs, balloon tires and comfortable upholstery -- these are some of the ways that experts have discovered to eliminate the jolts and jars in automobile riding."

When I heard that sentence it set me thinking about the jolts and jars of life, especially family life in these rushed and hurried days. Why aren't there experts at work discovering shock absorbers and balloon tires to make homes run smoothly and to prevent jarring and jolting in the family? My household and I'm sure many others, would profit by a visit from an expert every now and then who would overhaul and check up on the jolts and jars that occur, would help perfect the mechanism by removing a cause of strain here and a conflict there, and would suggest new ways of running the home that would add to its general happiness. In the absence of such experts, however, parents and aunts and uncles and even grandparents might well stop and take stock, every now and then, of the running of this complex mechanism and see whether improvements can't be made here and there to help the family's well-being.

The causes of family jolts and jars are many and varied. Most of them could easily be prevented by a little intelligent thought and effort.

Wrangling at mealtimes is one serious cause, and the effect on the nerves, especially of the young members of the family, may be quite as bad as the effect of bumping along for many miles in a car with poor springs and no shock absorbers. Mother comes home from a day of shopping short tempered, irritable and on the verge of a nervous headache and finds the house in disorder, the children up to mischief or the groceries for dinner late. Then father returns from a strenuous day at the office, himself on edge. The result may be an unhappy clash at the dinner table, hasty words, resulting perhaps in tears, perhaps in indigestion, certainly general unhappiness. A little restraint and intelligent thought can prevent such an occurrence even when parents are tired. If

adults must have heated discussions, they should always take place away from the children. Mealtimes should be pleasant social occasions, not battlefields. How can parents expect their children to get the proper nourishment from their food when they must sit by and see a clash between the two great authorities in their world? Think of the jolt this must be to the small child's mind trying to comprehend what this world is all about anyway and how to get along in it. Think of the feeling of impermanence and insecurity about life that this must give him.

Sundays and holidays may be another cause of strain on the family. There was undoubtedly something to be said against the stern old-fashioned Sunday where the children were obliged to sit quietly through long church services where all their natural activities were checked and a solemn atmosphere prevailed everywhere. That was one extreme. The hectic way many people observe Sunday today is another extreme, and is probably quite as bad for the mental and emotional life of the children.

Uncle Ebenzer has a pet aversion to one way of spending Sunday. He calls it the automobile Sunday. As he says, the automobile, while enjoyed for a short time by the average child, soon becomes a confining and boring affair and when his elders insist on making him spend the whole day in the car with sketchy indifferent meals, drug store drinks and the fatigue that affects older more seasoned travelers, it may be a big factor in family strain. The Monday following when everybody in the house is tired will be blue Monday all right.

In my opinion, family life can be just as happy today as yesterday if there is as much cooperation as there used to be. Tact, forbearance and mutual give and take are some of the best shock prevention devices that I know.

While we're on the subject of going to extremes, it might be a good idea to mention the matter of order in the home. Far be it from me to urge lack of orderliness in housekeeping. Though my bureau drawers and sewing basket do have a hard time keeping straight, I am a firm believer in order, but -- I believe in it only in reasonable amounts, only enough to make for beauty and efficiency in the home. Once in a while I go into a house where it seems as if the exact correct position of each piece of furniture means far more to the mother than the mental health of her children, and where the discovery of a sin could be no worse than finding muddy tracks on the kitchen floor or dark fingermarks on a clean towel. Neatness and tidiness carried to such an extreme may be a menace, but, fortunately, this type of overdone housekeeper is not so prevalent today as she was in my childhood. There is however an opposite state of affairs that may be quite as bad -- the house where lack of order is a constant and increasing cause of strain. Because so many homes are much smaller today than once would have been considered possible, system and order becomes increasingly necessary. Places need to be carefully planned to hold the children's possessions, closets must be equipped to take care of their clothes conveniently in small space, and shelves should be built for books and toys. The inability to find hats, gloves,

rubbers or school books day after day when time is limited may be a great source of irritation. Time lost and tempers spoiled in searching for mislaid articles can total a heavy score of jolts and jars. We advocate comfortable convenient homelike orderliness because this does soften the jolts and jars, because it saves time and strength for the housekeeper, and makes the home attractive and livable to all its occupants, and because there is a sustaining and self-respecting element about it that is worth cultivating for the sake of the children.

So many inquiries about cooking broccoli (pronounced brock-cull-lee) have been pouring in that I am going to change my usual custom and give you a recipe on Tuesday. This new green vegetable, a member of the cauliflower family, was brought over from Italy in the last few years and seems to be becoming more popular with us Americans all the time. The interesting thing about it is that the edible parts are the bunches of green buds and their stems. The large outer leaves and the tough lower portion of the stalks are discarded. As the buds are very tender and cook quickly, it is necessary to cut the stalks in pieces so that they will be done at the same time as the buds. The Recipe Lady suggests trimming off the leaves and heavy stalks, then washing the vegetable carefully, and then cutting the stems into lengthwise slanting strips with the same flower heads attached to each strip. Drop these into lightly salted boiling water. Of course, the rule of lids off for green vegetables applies here. Leave the kettle uncovered and cook for from 15 to 25 minutes. As soon as the broccoli is tender and while the color is still fresh green, drain, season with salt and pepper to taste, and add melted butter or other fat, or serve with Hollandaise sauce.

Tomorrow: "Spring Hats for Young Heads."

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